LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A range-conversion method comprising:

receiving medical data records, wherein each of the medical data records includes at least a portion of a corresponding patient's medical history that includes one or more data fields and a field value associated with each data field;

identifying one or more of said data fields as a range-based data field; and

defining, by an authorized user who has authorized access to the medical data records, a plurality of text-based range descriptors, wherein each text-based range descriptor is associated with a range of field values for one of the range-based data fields.

2. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 1 wherein a text-string is associated with a specific data record.

3. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 2 wherein the specific data record includes a range-based data field, the range-conversion method further comprising:

incorporating, into the text-string associated with the specific data record, the text-based range descriptor that is associated with the field value of the range-based data field included in the specific data record.

4. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 1 further comprising

generating a text-string for each data record, wherein each text-string includes one or more text-based data descriptors, such that each data descriptor includes:

a field descriptor that defines a specific data field within the data record to which the text-string is related, and

a value descriptor that defines the field value associated with the specific data field.

5. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 4 wherein each text-string further includes a record identifier that identifies the data record to which the text-string is related.

6. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 4 wherein a specific data record includes a range-based data field, the range-conversion method further comprising:

incorporating, as the value descriptor of the text-string associated with the specific data record, the text-based range descriptor that is associated with the field value of the range-based data field included in the specific data record.

7. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 6 wherein each data descriptor includes one or more starting characters, one or more separator characters, and one or more ending characters.

8. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 7 wherein the field descriptor is positioned between the separator characters and one of the starting characters and the ending characters.

9. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 8 wherein the value descriptor is positioned between the separator characters and the other of the starting characters and the ending characters.

10. (Original) The range-conversion method of claim 1 wherein each range of field values is a numeric range.

11-20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously Presented) A computer program product residing on a computer readable medium having a plurality of instructions stored thereon which, when executed by the processor, cause that processor to:

receive medical data records, wherein each of the medical data records includes at least a portion of a corresponding patient's medical history that includes one or more data fields and a field value associated with each data field;

receive user selection of one or more of said data fields as a range-based data field; and

receive user definition of a plurality of text-based range descriptors, wherein each text-based range descriptor is associated with a range of field values for the selected one or more of the range-based data fields.

22. (Original) The computer program product of claim 21 wherein a text-string is associated with a specific data record.

23. (Original) The computer program product of claim 21 wherein the specific data record includes a range-based data field, the computer program product further comprising instructions for:

incorporating, into the text-string associated with the specific data record, the text-based range descriptor that is associated with the field value of the range-based data field included in the specific data record.

24. (Original) The computer program product of claim 21 further comprising instructions for:

generating a text-string for each data record, wherein each text-string includes one or more text-based data descriptors, such that each data descriptor includes:

a field descriptor that defines a specific data field within the data record to which the text-string is related, and

a value descriptor that defines the field value associated with the specific data field.

25. (Original) The computer program product of claim 24 wherein each text-string further includes a record identifier that identifies the data record to which the text-string is related.

26. (Original) The computer program product of claim 24 wherein a specific data record includes

a range-based data field, the computer program product of claim further comprising

instructions for:

incorporating, as the value descriptor of the text-string associated with the specific data record, the text-based range descriptor that is associated with the field value of the range-based data field included in the specific data record.

27. (Original) The computer program product of claim of claim 26 wherein each data descriptor includes one or more starting characters, one or more separator characters, and one or more ending characters.

28. (Original) The computer program product of claim of claim 27 wherein the field descriptor is positioned between the separator characters and one of the starting characters and the ending characters.

29. (Original) The computer program product of claim of claim 28 wherein the value descriptor is positioned between the separator characters and the other of the starting characters and the ending characters.

30. (Original) The computer program product of claim of claim 21 wherein each range of field values is a numeric range.

31-40. (Canceled)

41. (Previously Presented) A searching system comprising:

a server system including a computer processor and associated memory, the server system having a database that includes a plurality of medical data records, wherein each of the medical data records includes at least a portion of a corresponding patient's medical history;

wherein the server system is configured to:

receive medical data records, wherein each data record includes one or more data fields and a field value associated with each data field, and wherein said field value includes a patient-specific value for the corresponding patient;

identify one or more of said data fields as a range-based data field that can accept any numeric value within a range of valid numeric values; and

define a plurality of text-based range descriptors, wherein each text-based range descriptor is associated with a range of field values for one of the range-based data fields, wherein each of the text-based range descriptors represents a corresponding medical status of the patient reflected by field values contained in the range of field values associated with the text-based range descriptor.

42. (Original) The searching system of claim 41 wherein the server system is coupled to a distributed computing network.

43-52. (Canceled)

53. (Previously Presented) The range-conversion method of claim 1 wherein each of the defined text-based range descriptors represents a corresponding medical status of the patient reflected by field values contained in the range of field values associated with the text-based range descriptor.

54. (Previously Presented) The range-conversion method of claim 1 wherein said authorized user comprises an authorized medical service provider of a patient.

55. (Previously Presented) The range-conversion method of claim 54 wherein said medical records are stored to a computer-based repository, and wherein said authorized medical service provider possesses an access key for the patient that permits access to at least a portion of the patient's medical records.

56. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 21 wherein each of the defined text-based range descriptors represents a corresponding medical status of the patient reflected by field values contained in the range of field values associated with the text-based range descriptor.

57. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 21 wherein said user comprises an authorized medical service provider of a patient.